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### **Exploring the Link between psychological safety, creative self-efficacy, and employee Innovation Behavior in China's e-commerce industry**

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#### **Abstract**

Innovation and creativity are essential for success in this market because of its rapid expansion and fierce rivalry. A proactive mentality in employees may improve their creative output, according to a prior study. However, there isn't much research that looks at the underlying mechanisms of how proactive personalities affect creative ability. Furthermore, contextual elements that could work as helpful conditions haven't gotten enough academic attention. In the Chinese e-commerce sector, this study looks at the connections between psychological safety (PS), creative self-efficacy (CSE), and employee innovation behavior (EIB). This study finds that PS and CSE had a favorable effect on EIB using survey data from workers in China, encompassing Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Shanghai. Additionally, CSE mediates the link between PS and EIB to some extent. These results imply that encouraging development in China's e-commerce sector requires developing a safe and encouraging work environment that supports employees' confidence in their capacity to come up with original solutions.

#### **Keywords**

China e-commerce, psychological safety (PS), creative self-efficacy (CSE), employee innovation behavior (EIB)

## **Introduction**

In today's cutthroat corporate environment, innovation behavior is essential for company growth and success. Organizations must constantly innovate and create innovative goods, services, and procedures if they want to remain ahead of the competition. EIB, which is the procedure of creating, disseminating, and putting into practice new ideas, is crucial for fostering innovation within firms. Therefore, firms must have an EIB -friendly workplace. Psychological safety describes an individual's belief that they may take risks with others at work without fear of repercussions. It is an important predictor of employee creativity and innovation because it helps employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas and taking risks without fear of negative consequences [1]. In the e-commerce industry in China, where competition is fierce and innovation is key, fostering a culture of PS can encourage workers to take chances and come up with new and creative ideas [2]. PS has been recognized as one element that is essential for developing such an environment. PS is characterized as a shared conviction among team members that there is safety in numbers while taking interpersonal risks [3]. Employees can take chances, share ideas, and communicate openly with their co-workers when they feel psychologically comfortable, which can promote more innovative behavior.

Creative self-efficacy, on the other hand, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to generate new and innovative ideas. In the e-commerce industry in China, where there is constant pressure to innovate and stay ahead of competitors, having employees with high levels of creative self-efficacy can be beneficial [4]. When employees believe in their ability to generate new and innovative ideas, they are more likely to engage in creative problem-solving and come up with new and innovative solutions to the challenges they face [5]. CSE is another element that may have an impact on EIB. CSE is a term used to describe a person's confidence in their capacity to develop and apply creative ideas [6]. People with high CSE scores are more probable to participate in creative endeavors and develop novel solutions. Therefore, to encourage innovative behavior among their workforce, firms must nurture CSE. Finally, employee innovation behavior refers to the extent to which employees engage in behaviors that contribute to organizational innovation. This can include generating new ideas, sharing knowledge and expertise, and taking risks to try new approaches [7]. In the e-commerce industry in China, where innovation is critical for success, fostering a culture of employee innovation behavior can help organizations stay ahead of the competition and adapt to changing market conditions.

Overall, these three variables are all important factors to consider when promoting innovation in the e-commerce industry in China [8]. By fostering a culture of psychological safety, and providing opportunities for employees to develop their CSE and EIB, organizations can create a workplace that is conducive to innovation and adaptability. This study's goal is to look into the connections between PS, CSE, and EIB in China's e-commerce sector. The purpose of the study

is to provide light on how these elements affect the emergence of an innovative workplace culture and how firms might improve PS and CSE to encourage innovative behavior within their workforce. The study also intends to provide suggestions for future studies and procedures in this field and to identify any organizational or demographic characteristics that might mitigate the correlations between PS, CSE, and EIB.

### **Related works**

The paper [9] investigated the impact of perceived over-qualification on creative activity at work. This research contends that perceived over-qualification enhances inventive behavior both Specifically and generally by increasing employee creative self-confidence by fusing self-efficacy and human capital theories. It also looks at the constraints placed on this process by perceived psychological safety. The research [10] focused on the relationships between encouraging leadership (a work resource) and employee innovation (a job demand). China provided a total of 308 valid sample collections. In structural equation modeling, the construct validity and path linkages are investigated. The research [11] aimed to answer the question, "Does adopting a servant-leadership style within a firm encourage more creative thinking among employees?" among those working for multinational corporations (MNCs) in developing markets. The research [12] suggested that psychological safety, a feeling of interpersonal trust, and belonging to a team play a significant role in determining groupware technology adoption in a learning environment. They create and put to the test a model of the causes and effects of psychological safety. The study [13] investigated the impact that works qualities have on shared leadership and will also investigate the modifying factors that psychological safety and perceived self-efficacy have on the link that exists between job features and shared leadership. The research [14] provided a framework that combines the Technology organization and Environment, Theory of planned behavior, and Technology acceptance model and extends the constructs to enhance literature and capture certain unique characteristics of small and medium-sized firms. The work [15] developed and evaluated a theoretical model that, by emphasizing the perceived degree of psychological safety and its chosen antecedents, explains the intention to continue information sharing in a virtual community. The research [16] aimed to evaluate the mediating function of psychological safety while observing the impact of an inclusive leadership style on psychological discomfort. It develops and tests ideas using the theoretical frameworks of the job demands-resources theory and the theory of shattered assumptions. The study [17] examined empirical data on the effects of gamification, psychosocial safety climate (PSC), and digital engagement on workplace engagement. The research [18] explored specifically how well firms in Indonesia have fared with their strategies in light of the rise of the online retail sector. In this case, the study investigates how knowledge management may help an organization become more innovative, get a competitive advantage, and boost

its online sales via e-commerce. The study's objective was to learn more about how information technology skills and fleet management techniques relate to and affect the provision of services. The study [19] focused on the interactions and effects of fleet management techniques and information technology capabilities. Examining the model validation with a quantitative technique. The descriptive correlation design is used as the approach in that investigation. The research [20] focused on group interviews and a usability test that used cutting-edge delivery service technologies. The research gives a basic diagram of the e-customer journey and offers insights into how service innovation influences e-customer behavior.

### **Problem statement**

The relationship between PS, CSE, and EIB has to be investigated in the Chinese e-commerce sector. Although PS and CSE are significant indicators of innovation behavior, there hasn't been much research on how they affect EIB in the Chinese e-commerce sector. Understanding how these concepts relate to one another could aid businesses in creating strategies that effectively motivate personnel to innovate, which is essential for the company's continued expansion and success. Consequently, the research challenge is to determine how much PS and CSE are related to EIB in the Chinese e-commerce sector.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this research is to analyze the connection between PS, CSE, and EIB in China's e-commerce sector. The specific goals of this study are to answer the following:

1. What is the interaction between PS and CSE amongst e-commerce employees in China?
2. How are CSE and EIB related to one another in Chinese e-commerce?
3. In China's e-commerce sector, does CSE mediate the interaction between PS and EIB?

### **Methodology**

The following is a description of the fundamental assumption framework:

#### **Independent variable: PS**

Psychological safety can be considered an independent variable in certain contexts, particularly in research studies aimed at investigating its effects on other variables. Psychological safety refers to the perception of individuals that they can express themselves in a safe space where they may share their opinions, emotions, and ideas without worrying about being judged or ridiculed, rejected, or punishment. In the workplace, psychological safety has been shown to have a significant impact on various outcomes, such as

employee creativity, innovation, productivity, and job satisfaction. For example, research has shown that when employees feel psychologically safe, they are more open with their thoughts and ideas, which improves the quality of decisions and the efficiency of issue resolution. In this sense, psychological safety can be considered an independent variable, as it is being manipulated or measured in studies to determine its impact on other dependent variables, such as employee performance, motivation, and well-being. By manipulating or measuring psychological safety, researchers can gain insights into the extent to which it influences various outcomes and identify ways to improve it in organizations. It is important to note, however, that psychological safety is not always an independent variable. In some cases, it may also be a dependent variable, as it can be influenced by other variables such as leadership style, organizational culture, and team dynamics. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the context and research question when determining whether psychological safety is an independent or dependent variable.

#### **Mediating variable: CSE**

Individuals who have high levels of creative self-efficacy are confident in their ability to generate original concepts that lead to valuable results. Creativity, learning, orientation, leadership, and self-efficacy are just a few of the organizational behaviors that have been proven to benefit from high levels of creative self-efficacy. In this paper, we propose that self-efficacy for creative problem-solving moderates the connection between proactive character traits and inventiveness at work. According to the study's authors, employees' belief in their creative abilities moderated the connection between their openness to learning and their originality on the job. Proactive employees are more likely to engage in both individual and organizational learning activities, both of which may help them develop a higher sense of confidence in their creative abilities. Proactive workers who engage in this kind of learning-oriented activity foster their sense of creative self-efficacy and personal growth, allowing them to approach their work with fresh ideas. Therefore, having faith in one's creative abilities boosted output in a roundabout way. In addition, workers with a proactive disposition and high levels of CSE are more likely to take initiative and find novel solutions to problems. Employees who are seen as proactive are more likely to encourage a culture of originality and problem-solving by focusing on personal development and embracing change in the workplace. Employees who have faith in their creative ability are a greater propensity to invest the necessary work and time to produce original work. On top of that, proactive workers often show a high level of interest in a variety of network-building activities aimed at fostering connections with both internal and external peer groups. Proactive workers' ability to self-confer and their willingness to actively participate in organizational transformation are two factors that make them invaluable to any firm. Employees who are open to new ideas and have had a wide range of life experiences report feeling more confident in their

ability to solve creative problems and are more emotionally invested in their work, both of which contribute to higher levels of creative output.

**Dependent variable: EIB**

Employee innovation behavior can be considered a dependent variable, as it is influenced by various independent variables such as organizational culture, leadership style, employee motivation, and creativity. Innovation behavior refers to the actions and behaviors of employees that result in the generation, development, and implementation of new ideas, processes, products, or services within an organization. It involves a willingness to take risks, think creatively, and experiment with new approaches to solve problems and improve business outcomes. Organizational culture plays a critical role in shaping employee innovation behavior. An organizational culture that values and encourages innovation can encourage a culture of innovation by creating a setting where staff members aren't afraid to try new things. In contrast, a culture that prioritizes conformity and stability may discourage employees from taking innovative actions. Leadership style is another key factor that can influence employee innovation behavior. Leaders who are supportive, and open-minded, and provide resources to support innovation are likely to inspire and motivate employees to engage in innovative behavior. On the other hand, leaders who are authoritarian, risk-averse, or micromanaging may inhibit employee innovation behavior. Employee motivation is also important in driving innovation behavior. Motivated employees are more likely to engage in innovative behavior because they have a desire to achieve and excel in their work. In addition, they have a higher chance of remaining in the face of obstacles and setbacks, which is critical for generating and implementing new ideas. Finally, creativity is a key determinant of employee innovation behavior. Creative employees can generate and develop new ideas and approaches to problem-solving, which is essential for innovation. Creativity can be fostered through training, exposure to diverse perspectives, and the provision of resources and time to experiment with new ideas. In summary, employee innovation behavior can be considered a dependent variable, as it is influenced by organizational culture, leadership style, employee motivation, and creativity. By understanding these factors, organizations can create an environment that fosters innovation and encourages employees to engage in innovative behavior.

**Hypothesis-1 (H1):** *PS has a beneficial impact on EIB in the Chinese e-commerce sector.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** *In China's e-commerce sector, CSE mediates the interaction between PS and EIB.*

**Hypothesis-3 (H3):** *PS and CSE have a favorable impact on EIB in the Chinese e-commerce sector.*

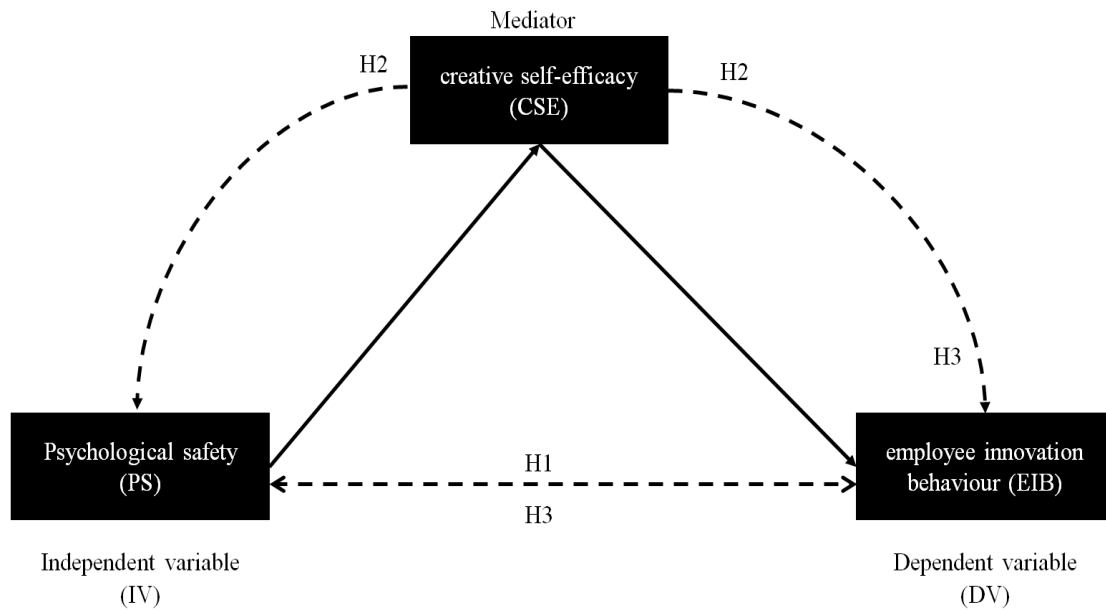


Figure: Conceptual framework

### Data description

Designers involved with Chinese e-market systems in top Chinese cities like Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Shanghai were given access to an online version of the questionnaire. Design professionals from the fields of interaction, user experience, product, user interface, and were invited. The study team's network of online design community organizations received the link to the survey.

Additionally, we conducted interviews with 8 of the survey respondents using deliberate sampling; each participant gave their consent. Seven interviews were chosen from businesses in Shenzhen, where innovation and creativity are key local missions. Online interviews were held for these studies.

The primary purpose of the interview questions was to go into further detail and explore the quantitative findings that were pertinent to the study. The primary interview questions are:

1. Would you mind sharing your experiences with innovation in the Chinese e-commerce market? What do you mean by innovation and what do you believe are the key elements for promoting innovation in this sector?
2. What do you think the PS level is like in your group or company? Could you provide some examples of how PS is encouraged or discouraged in your workplace?
3. How crucial is CSE, in your opinion, for employees to participate in activities connected to innovation? How is CSE promoted or fostered at your place of employment?
4. Can you give an example of a moment when you were psychologically secure enough to take social risks and make a creative suggestion? How did this experience alter your desire to take part in activities involving innovation?

5. How, in your opinion, do PS and CSE relate to EIB in the Chinese e-commerce sector? What particular mechanisms or procedures do you believe are at play?
6. Do you have any knowledge of any organizational or demographic variables that affect the interaction between PS, CSE, and EIB in the Chinese e-commerce sector?
7. How can businesses improve PS and CSE to encourage an innovative work environment among staff in China's e-commerce sector? What specific tactics or measures do you advise?
8. What position do you believe PS and CSE will possess in the coming years of innovation in the Chinese e-commerce sector? How do you see this future developing?

### **Data description**

92 different data points were gathered. Because we deliberately hired employees with expertise in interaction design, user interface design, user experience design and product design collecting samples was difficult. By classifying the response time as either being too lengthy or too short, we were able to eliminate 10 surveys with poor reliability. This study comprised 82 valid data points. The participants' standard deviation was 3.66 and their average term of employment was 4.98 years. They worked in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, among other cities. There were 68 participants, with 32 males (39%) and 50 women (61%) who were all between the ages of 25 and 35. A postgraduate degree was held by 39 participants (47.6%), whereas an undergraduate degree was held by 43 (52.4%). A total of 50 participants in the study (61%) and 32 of them (39%) engaged in design teams with eight or more members, respectively. A yearly salary under RMB10000 was earned by 16 participants (19.5%), between RMB10000 and RMB20,000 was earned by 41 participants (50%), and beyond RMB20,000 by 25 individuals. 22 individuals (27%) had marriages while 60 of them (73%) were single.

### **Data analysis**

SPSS 26 was used to analyze the survey data to test the proposed correlations between PS, CSE, and EIB. In this study, the concept validity is evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and the derived hypotheses are tested using a hierarchical linear regression model. Conceptual and practical repercussions have been provided, along with ideas for additional research.

### **Expected Contributions**

This study is expected to make several contributions to the existing literature on EIB. First, this study will provide insights into the link between PS,



CSE, and EIB in the context of China's e-commerce industry. Second, this study will contribute to the understanding of how CSE mediates the relationship between PS and EIB. Third, the findings of this study will have implications for e-commerce companies in China to create a supportive work environment that fosters PS and CSE, leading to increased innovation behavior.

## Result

We investigated how different demographic traits affected three variables. What are PS, CSE, and EIB all important factors to consider when promoting innovation in the e-commerce industry in China. PS refers to a work environment where employees feel safe to take chances and express their ideas without concern about adverse effects. Employees are more willing to take risks and think outside the box when they feel emotionally and physically secure in their workplace such as brainstorming new ideas, taking calculated risks, and experimenting with new approaches. Creative self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to generate creative ideas and solve problems. When employees have high levels of creative self-efficacy, they are more likely to engage in innovative behaviors because they believe they can come up with new and valuable ideas. Employee innovation behavior refers to the degree to which employees engage in innovative activities, such as idea generation, experimentation, and implementation. When employees feel psychologically safe and have high levels of creative self-efficacy, they are more likely to engage in innovative behavior and contribute new and valuable ideas to the organization. Overall; these three variables are interrelated and can impact each other. For example, when employees feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to develop higher levels of creative self-efficacy, which can then lead to increased employee innovation behavior. Conversely, when employees engage in innovative behaviors, they may feel more psychologically safe and develop higher levels of creative self-efficacy.

Gender substantially impacted PS, the overall score for achievement motivation, and CSE, according to independent samples t-tests. Men outperformed women on the CSE ( $t = 2.404, p < 0.05$ ) and PS ( $t = 2.537, p < 0.05$ ) tests the CSE ( $t = 2.404, p < 0.05$ ) and PS ( $t = 2.537, p < 0.05$ ) and tests, men outperformed women. Various demographics do not like work position, age, educational background, or pay level nor were the dependent variables affected. Decreased personal accomplishment in the e-market, also differed substantially across genders ( $t = 1.782, p < 0.1$ ). Table 1 and 2 shows the Statistics Analysis of Men and Women. And Figures 2 and 3 illustrate a contrast between the means and standard deviations of males and females.

Table 1: Statistics Analysis of Men

				Men (n=-32)	
	t	df	sig	Mean	Standard deviation
Decreased personal accomplishment	-1.782	80	0.079	14.688	4.883
Employee innovation behavior	-1.273	80	0.208	34.624	7.407
Depersonalization	0.601	80	0.548	12.217	5.072
Creative self-efficacy	2.404 *	80	0.018	4.301	0.985
Emotional exhaustion	-0.076	80	0.938	18.186	6.896
Psychological safety	2.537 *	80	0.014	42.251	6.406

Table 2: Statistics Analysis of Women

				Women (n=50)	
	t	df	sig	Mean	Standard deviation
Decreased personal accomplishment	-1.782	80	0.079	16.601	4.645
Employee innovation behavior	-1.273	80	0.208	36.621	6.601
Depersonalization	0.601	80	0.548	11.539	4.925
Creative self-efficacy	2.404 *	80	0.018	3.763	0.989
Emotional exhaustion	-0.076	80	0.938	18.301	6.220
Psychological safety	2.537 *	80	0.014	39.139	4.687

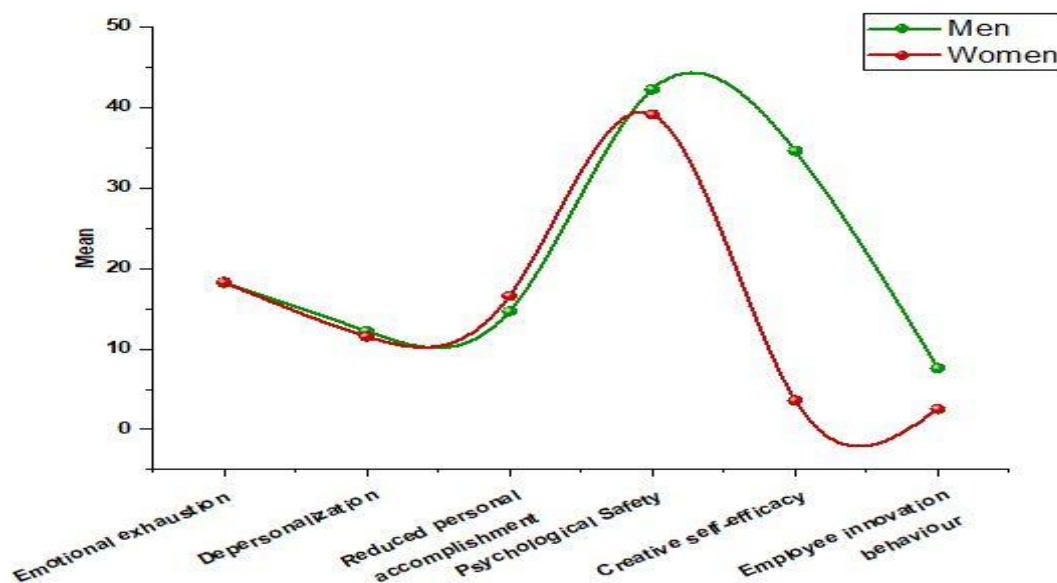


Figure 2: Comparison of Mean between Men and Women.

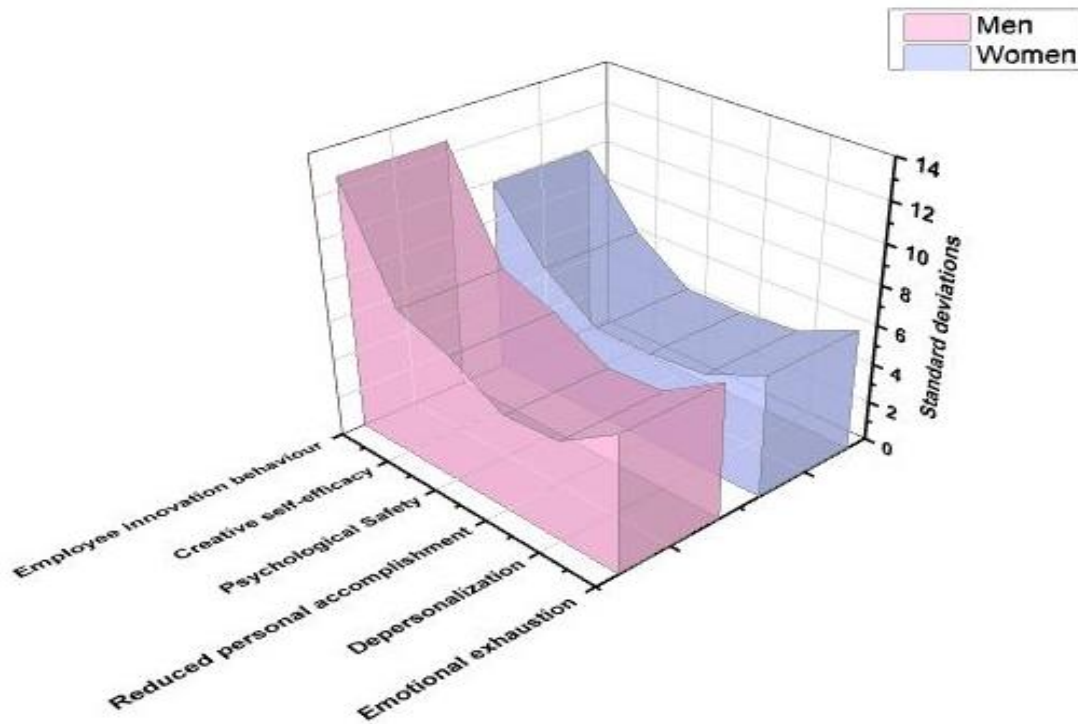


Figure 3: Comparison of Standard deviation between Men and women.

These quantitative findings revealed that the majority of the surveyed designers had a moderate understanding of the Chinese e-market (Table 3). According to the assessment criteria, the key issues were depersonalization and decreased personal achievement. Figures 4 and 5 show the result of the Mean standard deviation respectively.

Table 3: Results of the t-test, means, and standard deviations

	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Comparison Value</b>	<b>t</b>
Depersonalization	11.8049	4.96267	11	1.469
Emotional exhaustion	18.2561	6.45174	25	-9.465 **
Psychological safety	40.3537	5.59623		
decreased personal accomplishment	15.8537	4.80258	16	-0.276
Creative self-efficacy	3.9726	1.01760		
Employee innovation behavior	35.8415	6.95216		

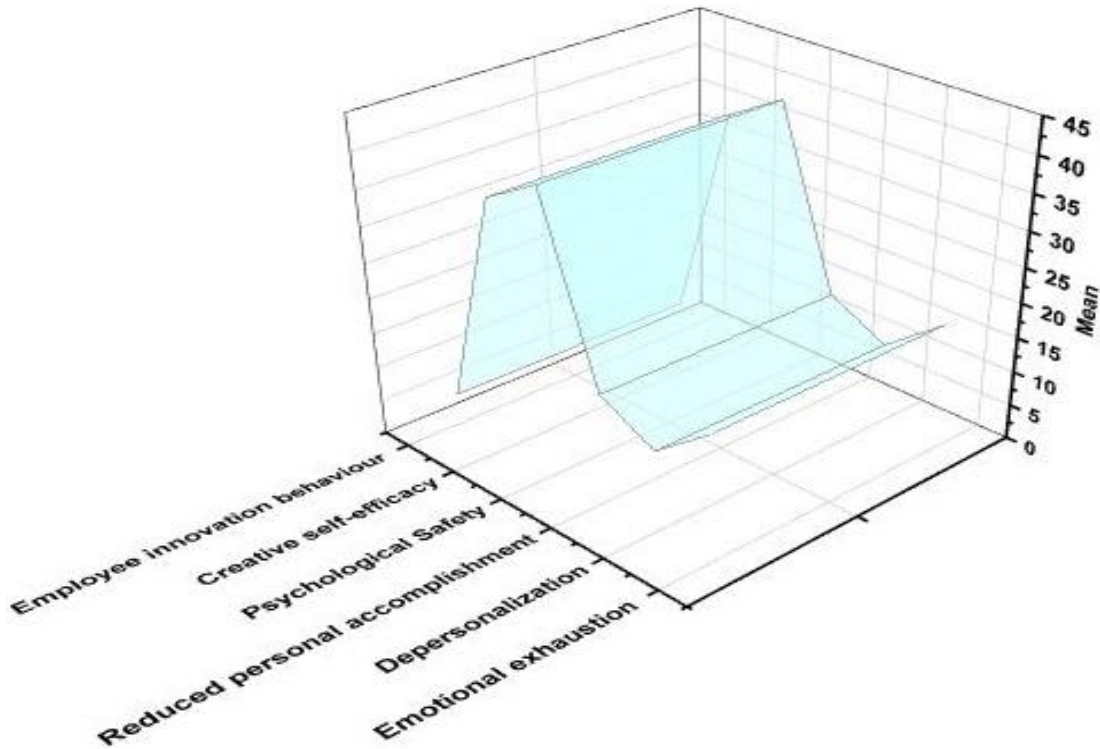


Figure 4: Result of Mean

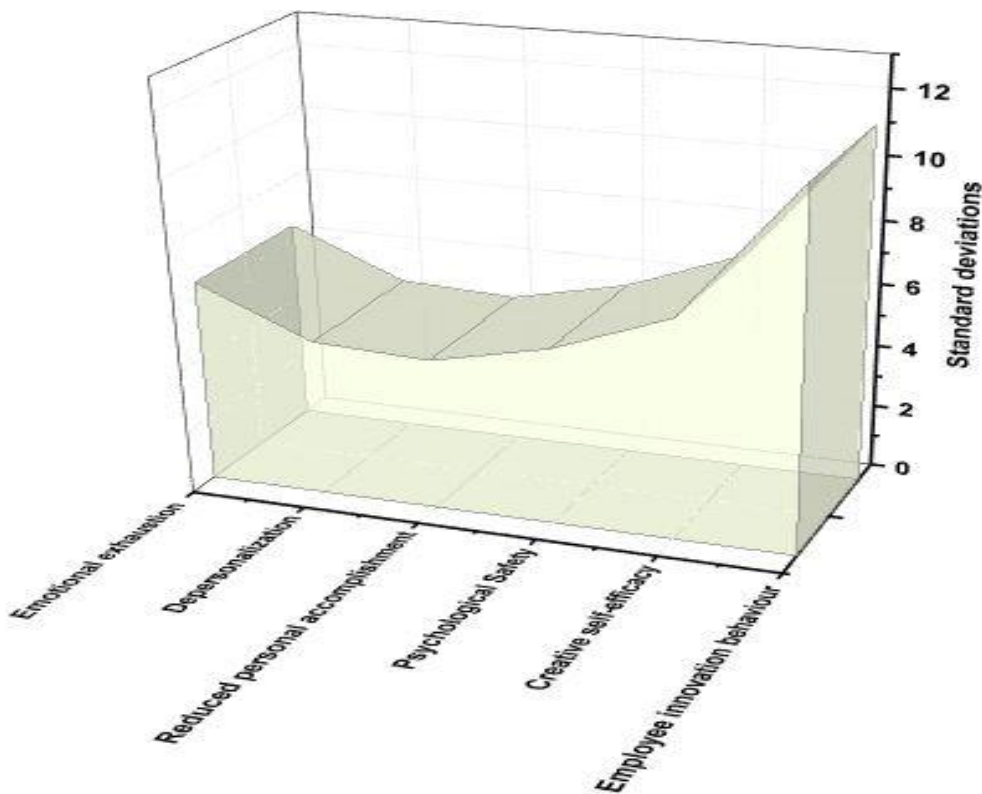


Figure 5: Result of Standard deviation

The results of the Pearson correlation test are shown in Table 4. Positive and significant relationships were found between the designers' CSE and their PS ( $r = 0.579, p < 0.01$ ) and their overall accomplishment motivation score ( $r = 0.556, p < 0.01$ ).

Table 4: The Pearson correlations.

	M	SD	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Reduced Personal Accomplishment	Psychological safety	Employee innovation behavior
Depersonalization	11.8049	4.96267	0.504**				
Emotional exhaustion	18.2561	6.45174					
Psychological	40.3537	5.59623	-0.218*	-0.219*	-0.501**		
Reduced personal accomplishment	15.8537	4.80258	0.112	0.302**			
Creative self-efficacy	3.9726	1.01760	-0.166	-0.167	-0.548**	0.579**	-0.433**
Employee innovation behavior	35.8415	6.95216	0.478**	0.410**	0.388*	-0.602**	

We conducted a stepwise regression to further examine the connections between the mediator variable (CSE) and independent variable (PS) presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Stepwise regression for mediator variable (CSE)

Mediator Variable	Estimate	$\beta$	t	$\rho$	r	R <sup>2</sup>
Creative self-efficacy	Psychological Safety	0.407	4.126**	0.000		
	Constant	2.145			0.652	0.425

Table 6: Stepwise regression for Independent variable (PS)

Independent Variables	Estimate	$\beta$	t	$\rho$	r	R <sup>2</sup>
Psychological Safety	Creative self-efficacy	0.436	4.126**	0.000		
	Constant	27.694			0.620	0.384

## **Discussion**

The first finding of this research is that the Chinese e-market designers polled are suffering moderate degrees of, mostly along the dimensions of depersonalization and diminished sense of personal achievement. The reason for this might be that designers who work for organizations with an established design process are encouraged to focus on efficiency rather than originality. Furthermore, designers' efforts are judged not according to internal criteria but rather external ones, leading to frustration and eventual burnout. Because of the importance of self-confidence in the design process for producing novel goods and services, designers tend to have high levels of both accomplishment drive and critical thinking ability. We found that the designers' mean CSE was 3.97, a substantial rise from the mean CSE of 1.965 for 274 non-designers working in service and technology across four Chinese cities. Companies need to make designers feel safe enough to devote themselves fully to their projects. Gender had an important role with other demographic factors in determining CSE. Our data shows that males performed better than females on both the PS ( $t = 2.536, p < 0.05$ ) and CSE ( $t = 2.404, p < 0.05$ ) tests of intelligence. Companies should take into account workers' unique personalities while making changes to the workplace. In addition, designers need a certain amount of freedom to act independently. Improvements in CSE may be possible if researchers take an effort to foster employees' feelings of competence and community.

A reduced sense of Individual achievement was inversely connected with CSE and predicted job burnout. Behavior indicative of low personal achievement often includes being critical of one's work and performance and feeling less than confident and successful in one's professional life. The designers' effort was described as weak and ineffectual, with insufficient energy being generated to cause CSE. The finding that CSE was unrelated to emotional tiredness is corroborated by the finding that positive emotions encourage creative thinking whereas negative emotions had a less effect. We argue that the CSE requires more mental effort and places more emphasis on introspection. A major contributor to workplace burnout is emotional tiredness, which highlights how the emotional process directly affects one's performance on the job. It seems to reason that there is no link between these two psychological processes.

In China's e-commerce industry, fostering psychological safety and creative self-efficacy can be challenging due to cultural factors such as high power distance, collectivism, and face-saving. However, organizations can take steps to promote these factors, such as providing training and support for employees, creating a supportive work environment, recognizing and rewarding innovation, and encouraging collaboration and communication. Promoting PS, CSE, and EIB organizations in China's e-commerce industry can enhance their competitiveness and drive long-term success.

## **Conclusion**

In China's e-commerce industry, psychological safety, creative self-efficacy, and staff innovation behavior are crucial variables that might affect organizational success. Employees are more likely to participate in actions that might foster innovation, such as sharing ideas, trying novel techniques, and working with others when they feel psychologically comfortable and have strong creative self-efficacy. These characteristics can be difficult to foster in a society that values collectivism, face-saving, and high power distance, but organizations can take steps to encourage these characteristics by offering employees training and support, fostering a positive work environment, and rewarding innovation. Organizations may boost their competitiveness and achieve long-term success in China's quickly developing e-commerce market by encouraging PS, CSE, and EIB. While PS, CSE, and EIB are important factors for success in China's e-commerce industry, there are also some limitations to consider. First, cultural factors can make it challenging to foster PS and CSE in China's e-commerce industry. For instance, workers may be less inclined to speak out in a society with a large power distance and challenge authority figures. Additionally, collectivist values may prioritize group harmony over individual creativity, which can limit innovation. Second, while promoting employee innovation behavior is important, it is also important to balance risk-taking with risk management. Innovation can come with inherent risks, and organizations need to ensure that they have systems in place to manage those risks and protect their reputation and financial health. Third, while PS and CSE can promote creativity; they are not the only factors that contribute to organizational success. Other factors, such as leadership, organizational structure, and market conditions, can also play a significant role. In a future study, researchers could investigate how creative self-efficacy is developed and nurtured among workers in the e-commerce sector. This could involve examining the impact of training programs, mentoring, and other developmental interventions on creative self-efficacy, as well as exploring the role of organizational culture and leadership in promoting creativity.

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